



Association Européenne pour l'Information
sur le Développement Local a.s.b.l

AEIDL demonstrates an exemplary sustainable construction

The 'greening' of the roof of AEIDL's building will have a great demonstration value. This was the message of a 'sustainable lunch' held at the association's offices on 5 November 2012. The lunch brought together around 50 stakeholders in sustainable construction and urban development: architects, landscapers and city planners, businesses of the environmental sector and of the social economy, municipal civil servants, journalists as well as representative of the Brussels Environment and Urban regeneration Ministry and a delegate of Triodos bank.

This demonstrative event was initiated by Claude Rener (Arc and Style), entrepreneur, and Jean-Luc Bodson, coordinator of SAW-B, an association that implements a project aiming to develop two "clusters" within the framework of the Brussels Employment Environment Alliance programme. These two clusters combine social economy and sustainable construction. The objective is to bring together businesses around several themes or activities such as training, the transfer of good practice and common responses to private or public tenders.

Two companies involved in the work carried out at AEIDL are part of 'Cluster Nr. 1'. According to Mr Bodson, the site visit met a dual purpose: present the work achieved by two companies active in the cluster and encourage other companies to join the cluster by showing them a fairly ambitious ecological renovation worksite in an urban environment.

Managing director, Jean Vanweydeveld, presented AEIDL and explained the context of what he called a 'good project', perfectly consistent with the values of AEIDL's not for profit status: "This renovation had to be coherent with the principles that we 'preach' every day through our programs and projects: bottom-up approach, social responsibility, environmental protection, sustainable local development... "

Pierre Lenders (Acrotère), the architect who coordinates the works, explained the technical parameters of the project: the ecological renovation of AEIDL's flat roof (390 m²) by adding on the old roofing a 16 cm thick layer of expanded cork for insulation, a new EPDM seal, a geotextile root barrier, and

by replacing 19 old skylights with new super insulated skylights, as well as the greening of a 300 m² surface area with plants that require only a thin layer of soil and the setting up of a fully accessible terrace. This renovation also involved upgrading the electrical system and air conditioning, as well as installing about thirty photovoltaic solar panels.

The contractor, Claude Renner (Arc & Style / Ecobuild), underlined the sustainability of the renovation, which is also supported by its user-friendliness (the terrace is a new relaxation area for the staff) and electricity generation (30 solar panels will be installed in the spring of next year). According to Claude Renner, the green roof of AEIDL should last at least 50 years without any need to intervene.

From the example of AEIDL's renovation project, he insisted on the advantages of a cluster in the field of sustainable construction: "partners of a cluster tend to think in terms of economic niche where everyone has its place. (...) In this context of economic crisis and unfair competition from low-cost countries, it is essential to promote another vision of the construction sector by adopting a collective approach that not only reduces costs but also increases the pleasure of working with others in offering a quality service." This collective approach also has direct economic benefits such as group purchases that reduce costs (e.g. for the Portuguese cork and the Polish skylights in the case of AEIDL).

Étienne Duquenne (Nos Pilifs Farm) presented the technical aspects of the vegetation of the roof: it is accomplished by spreading a 15-20 cm layer of substrate composed of volcanic rock and compost and by installing fifteen varieties of resistant plants such as sedum. "The challenge is to evacuate rainwater while also keeping some for the plants", he summarized, explaining that, as well as boosting biodiversity (flowers, insects, birds, etc.), a green roof acts like a sponge, reducing and delaying runoff into municipal drains. Not to mention that the roof will be naturalized within two or three years and will be a major source of urban biodiversity (flowers, insects, birds ...).

Étienne Duquenne also highlighted two ecological elements of the renovated roof: the drainage material is made from recycled airline seats; the terrace (90 m²) is made from acacia, a European wood that has the same durability as exotic woods, but without the risk of coming from poorly managed forest or having a high ecological footprint caused by long distance transport.

The technical part of the visit had to include the presentation of the energy saving and production aspects of the project. This was done by Eric Rodebourg (JMR Security), the electricity contractor. In terms of energy savings, the insulation of the roof, the new lighting equipment and the double glazing skylights will substantially reduce AEIDL's energy bills (up to 5 times in the case of the new energy-saving lamps installed). As far as the production of

solar electricity is concerned, Renaud Janson (Renov Electric) explained that the building's location is not optimal because it is too shaded (35% less sun on average). Nevertheless, the important common wall facing south where the solar panels will be installed will make the installation profitable in ten years (instead of the 7 years generally advertised for this type of infrastructure).

The numerous exchanges aroused by this 'sustainable lunch' dedicated to AEIDL's worksite continued with a delicious mini-buffet prepared by Nos Pilifs Farm, also a member of Cluster Nr. 1.